

THE DICKENSIAN

A Magazine for Dickens Lovers
and Monthly Record of the Dickens Fellowship

Vol. VII.

OCTOBER, 1911.

No. 10.

WHEN FOUND—

THE sixth annual conference and public dinner of the Dickens Fellowship to be held in Bristol on October 7th seems likely to prove one of the most popular and interesting of the series. The local arrangements are in the hands of the Bristol and Clifton Dickens Society, which is affiliated to the Fellowship, and it is hoped that members will give adequate support to their efforts.

* * * * *

The conference will take place at the Society's Headquarters, Whatley Hall, Imperial Hotel, Clifton Down; at 11.30 a.m. In the afternoon a visit will be made to localities of Dickensian and other interest, and a glance at the special conference edition of Bristol's guide book to be presented to every member by Mr. James Baker indicates that these are numerous and famous. At 6.30 a reception will be held by the President, Professor R. P. Cowl, in the Imperial Hotel. He will afterwards preside at the dinner, which is timed to start at 7 o'clock. An influential company is expected to be present, including Mr. J. Cuming Walters, Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, Ald. Dr. E. H. Cook, J.P., Mr. T. Sturge Cottrell, J.P., and the members of the London Council. Tickets for the dinner, price five shillings each, should be applied for at once to Mr. E. W. Down, 35, Glens Avenue, Knowle, Bristol.

* * * * *

"Mr. Pickwick," a burlesque comedy in five acts, by MM. Georges Duval and Robert Charvay, produced last month at the Athénée, in Paris, seems to have proved a great success so far as pleasing the French audience was concerned. To the hard and fast Dickensian there is, however, much in the play to cause not a little surprise and alarm. What would happen if a faithful translation of it appeared on an English stage we fear to think. Through the courtesy of the *Evening Standard* we are able to reprint, on another page, Mr. John N. Raphael's excellent criticism of the play. If one could put all idea of the *Pickwick Papers* out of one's mind, doubtless we might find it all good fun, as he says. But is that possible?

* * * * *

The novels of Dickens are very much in evidence at the present time at various places of entertainment. Another "Drood" play was performed at Leeds recently by Mr. Oswald Cray's company; a sketch version of *A Tale of Two Cities* was produced last month at Balham by Mr. Arthur Rose, and was secured for the London music halls; a new play, "Sydney Carton," was to be seen at King's Theatre, Longsight, Manchester, a week or two back; and in addi-

tion to the French version of *Pickwick*, referred to above, an adaptation of *David Copperfield*, by M. Max Maurey, is to be staged at l'Odeon at the end of October, and a play from *Martin Chuzzlewit* at the Montmartre; whilst *Oliver Twist* is now pictured on the cinematograph in various towns and suburbs.

* * * * *

The National Dickens Library at the Guildhall has been greatly augmented during the last few months by the presentation of close upon seventy volumes, embracing various editions of the novels, stories, criticism, and other items of "ana." These are credited in the catalogue to the generosity of the Dickens Fellowship. The credit is due, however, to the publishers who so readily acceded to the Fellowship's solicitation for the books.

* * * * *

Mr. H. Snowden Ward, who shortly starts for a lecture tour of the United States of America, has been appointed special commissioner to the Dickens Fellowship, with full powers to organise and form branches in that country.

* * * * *

The opening meeting of the new session of the Dickens Fellowship in London takes place at Clifford's Inn Hall on October 24th, when Mr. Frank Speaight will give his new Dickens recital, "Alfred Jingle, Esquire, of No Hall, Nowhere." On November 4th a whist drive will be held at "Ye Mecca Café," at 7.30. Tickets 2s. each, to be had of the Secretary.

* * * * *

Our readers will be interested to learn that Mr. J. W. T. Ley has been appointed sub-editor of the new Portsmouth paper, *The Southern Daily Post*, and that he signalled his association with the novelist's birthplace by contributing to the issue of September 4th an interesting article on "The Portsmouth of Charles Dickens."

* * * * *

Mr. Frank Reynolds has painted a series of twenty-five illustrations for an edition of *David Copperfield*, which Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton are publishing this autumn. The same firm announce an edition of *A Christmas Carol*, with eight coloured illustrations and others in black and white by A. C. Michael.

* * * * *

Dr. H. Russell Wakefield, Dean of Norwich, who is a Vice-President of the Dickens Fellowship, has been appointed Bishop of Birmingham in succession to Dr. Gore.

* * * * *

Will Hon. Secretaries of Branches of the Dickens Fellowship kindly send us their programmes of meetings for the coming session for inclusion in the Diary each month?

* * * * *

There is a movement in Lewisham, the only one of London's suburbs which does not boast a theatre, to establish a theatre in connection with the centenary of the novelist's birth, to be known as "Dickens's Theatre."

THE EDITOR.

"MR. PICKWICK" *

AMUSING ADAPTATION ON THE FRENCH STAGE

By JOHN N. RAPHAEL

IT is a merry little sacrilege. "Mr. Pickwick," from the novel by the late Charles Dickens, has been produced at the Théâtre l'Athénée in Paris. The authors are MM. Georges Duval and Robert Charvay. They call their work a "comédie burlesque" upon the programme. The comedy was curiously conspicuous by its absence, but the burlesque was there, and there were moments when I experienced something of the feeling that I imagine might stir a member of the priesthood if he were suddenly to find himself watching an adaptation of the Old Testament as a musical comedy. For every Englishman who reads loves *Pickwick*, and approaches Dickens with affection and reverence.

There was music in the play. In the third act, which is Christmas at Manor Farm, Mr. Wardle and his guests danced under the mistletoe. The advance notices in the Paris newspapers have been telling us for a week past that the young man who composed the music, M. Heintz, was peculiarly adapted to the task, "because he had spent some years in America." That, I expect, is why Wardle, his sister, and his guests (of whom Mrs. Bardell of Goswell Street is one!) danced an emphatic cake-walk in honour of Christmas Day.

Charles Dickens knew his Paris and his France as well as, perhaps better than, any Englishman of his day. How the spirit of Dickens must have chuckled with glee as he watched last night's performance at the Théâtre de l'Athénée. And yet if one put all thought of the *Pickwick Papers* as they are out of one's mind, last night's performance was good fun. It was only when the authors tried to get at all near to Dickens (as they tried in the Court scene, where they gave us four good men and true only in the jury) that they bored us at all. At other times we laughed, and those of us who knew our *Pickwick* well often became helpless with laughter.

The play begins in Goswell Street—a glorified Goswell Street (and here let me compliment M. Abel Deval, the manager of the Athénée, on the charming Early Victorian scenery and delightful costumes with which he dressed the play)—to which come Wardle, his sister Rachel, and his two daughters, as well as Winkle, Tupman and Snodgrass, and Dodson and Fogg.

The authors had chosen the love affairs of Pickwick and Mrs. Bardell for their *leit motif*, and everything throughout the evening was made subservient to that. Dodson and Fogg, with a look about them of the first and second villains in transpontine melodrama, appeared in this first act at Goswell Street as well, and after Pickwick's departure on his travels, persuaded Mrs. Bardell to make all haste and join him. She joins him in the second act at the Bull Inn, at Rochester. In the French version Mr. Pickwick has allowed his friends to go to Rochester by coach, and he has driven there himself in the famous cab which, as you may remember, owned the horse which "lived at Pentonwill when he was

* Reprinted by permission of *The Evening Standard*.

at home." That horse has evidently been maligned by Dickens, for Mr. Pickwick got to Rochester behind him soon after the arrival of Snodgrass, Winkle and Tupman by the coach.

In the courtyard of the Bull Inn Pickwick makes Sam Weller's acquaintance, fights the cabman, and is rescued by Jingle—a funny little Jingle, who played most amusingly, and constantly reminded me of the methods of Mr. Dan Rolyat, Mr. Harry Randall, Mr. Walter Passmore, *et hoc genus omne*. As a matter of fact, I have seen the actor who played the part—Victor Henry—play Figg the detective in "The Merry Widow," and his methods in the two rôles have a strong family likeness.

In this second act at the Bull Inn, of which we see the courtyard, there is, of course, the ball. I think the authors missed their opportunity in omitting to split this act into two tableaux, and so letting us see the ball in the Assembly Rooms. For Tupman, in the inn yard, approaches Dr. Slammer's partner in the casual manner of a very rude Parisian who accosts a lady in a crowd, the comedy of the scene is wiped out entirely, and five minutes afterwards Pickwick is challenged and his fire-eating little opponent finds out his mistake—all in the courtyard, among the boots and bottles.

But, as I have said, if we want to enjoy the play we must forget our *Pickwick Papers*. So let us get along to Manor Farm. No attempt was made here to reproduce an old-time Christmas as Dickens drew it. This French *Pickwick*, you see, is a burlesque, and everything is to be rushed through with as much noise, as much rapidity, and as much romping as possible. Therefore the Pickwickians and Weller arrive, and Wardle rushes his friends off to and shoot rooks, after having astonished Mr. Pickwick and myself more than a little by producing his guest, Mrs. Bardell, whom he has invited to Manor Farm, for the G.C.M.P.C.'s especial benefit.

While rooks are being shot, Sam Weller and the fat boy Joe (Joe with an accent like this—"Joé") make one another's acquaintance, but before Joe has bolted his second mouthful we hear the shot and shriek which we expected, and Pickwick is brought in, wounded by the sportsman Winkle. No, you have not misread me. Pickwick is hurt, not Tupman. And Mrs. Bardell takes him off and applies fomentations to the wounded part, to which allusion is made during the rest of the play in a manner which would make a policeman blush. Pickwick returns in two minutes feeling a great deal better. is given an air cushion to sit upon, and the Christmas dinner begins at once—with the plum pudding—in true English fashion!

Before it begins, though, Jingle has arrived, and we learn that he has had a purple past some years before with Rachel Wardle. The guilty lovers lay the table for the Christmas dinner, and as they lay it decide to elope directly afterwards. Dinner is over quickly. This, when we recollect that it began with the plum pudding is not unnatural—and after a humorous grace by Wardle, and a toast or two, in the course of which Mrs. Bardell becomes

dreadfully intoxicated, and Mr. Pickwick's air pillow frightens the Wardle household by hissing like an escape of gas (this piece of Dickens business brought the house down), the clock strikes twelve.

Immediately everybody gets up, and, glass in hand, sings a song, the words of which are "Christmas, Christmas, Christmas," repeated *ad infinitum*, to M. Heintz's music. This being done, snap-dragon is brought in in a silver finger bowl, the table is put on one side, and the whole party dances a cake-walk, which will go down to history in Paris now as the Christmas dance which England danced a hundred years ago. The cake-walk was such a success that it was encored. It certainly deserved to be, for it was deliciously original.

The trial scene, which was the whole fourth act, was rather long-drawn and unfunny. Sam Weller becomes a sort of circus-clown, and I was fully prepared to see the court scene finish with a knock-about act in which Pickwick and Buzfuz would give a kind of "Two Macs" entertainment. For, though Pickwick looked just like Pickwick, he parodied his personality all through.

Then came the Fleet Prison, which the authors had fitted with a beautiful bar, behind which an extremely smart and very pretty barmaid dispenses drinks to all comers. Into this bar all the characters of the play are brought. Wardle comes there with Rachel and his daughters, and Rachel makes it up with Tupman. Pickwick meets Jingle there, and buys the marriage licence (which the French authors evidently think gives him a hold on Rachel) for £120. Then Mrs. Bardell turns up with the historical warming-pan, and the audience are left to form their own conclusions as to the terms on which she and Mr. Pickwick will live together for the future after their reconciliation.

And there you have "M. Piquevique de Paris" as distinct from the Pickwick we all know and love. I am not sure that I have any quarrel with my friends Duval and Charvay. Their intention was to write a play which should amuse Parisians, and they have certainly succeeded. Where I am at odds with them is that they have forgotten the fact that it was in their power to build up out of the *Pickwick Papers* an amusing play which upon excellent authority might have given Parisians of 1911 a real glimpse of English life in the nineteenth century, and have amused and interested them as well. They have not done this at all.

It would have been quite easy to show us Christmas at Manor Farm, for instance, and the Fleet as Dickens drew them. It would have been quite easy to reproduce his inimitable description of the Rochester ball on the stage. There was no need to make Sam Weller a clown. Winkle might have been left as Dickens and his illustrators drew him, and as for Mrs. Bardell—well, I won't say anything about the undue prominence of Mrs. Bardell. "Chercher la femme" is not only an axiom, but a necessity in France. I do think it more than a pity, though, to have lost all the dignity in Samuel Pickwick, to have thrown away the pathos which underlies Jingle, and to have made Sam Weller's Cockney wit a pretext for mere clowning.

CHARLES DICKENS AND BRISTOL

By O. SACK

IN view of the fact that the Dickens Fellowship is holding its sixth annual conference in Bristol on the 7th of this month, the following notes about the novelist's association with the city may be interesting.

Bristol figures prominently in *Pickwick*, was associated with the novelist in his early journalistic days, and in connection with his reading and theatrical tours.

Before Dickens became famous as a writer he visited Bristol as a Parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*, in company with Mr. Thomas Beard, to report the political speeches, in connection with Lord John Russell's election contest in Devonshire in May, 1835, and stayed at the Bush Inn in that city.

Writing from that address, he says he expects to forward "the conclusion of Russell's dinner by Cooper's Company's coach, leaving The Bush at half-past six next morning; and by the first Bell's coach on Thursday morning he will forward the report of the Bath dinner, endorsing the parcel for immediate delivery, with extra rewards for the porter."

This reporting expedition to the West of England was no doubt the one referred to in his speech at the Newspaper Press Fund dinner in 1865, when he described how he had done his transcription of notes in all sorts of vehicles, under all sorts of conditions and all sorts of roads. And there can also be no doubt but that this visit furnished him with the necessary knowledge of Bristol and other Western towns which he used in the *Pickwick Papers*.

It was to Bristol that Mr. Winkle, wisely deciding to fly from the wrath of the valorous Dowler, repaired by coach, thinking it "as good a place for his purpose as any other"; and it was at the Bush Inn there that he took up his quarters. Having walked forth on his arrival to view the city, it struck him "as being a shade more dirty than any place he had ever seen." This, no doubt, was a gross libel on Bristol, inspired by his nervous state of mind at the time. However, he inspected the docks and shipping, and viewed the cathedral, and then inquired his way to Clifton. "But, as the pavements of Bristol are not the widest or cleanest upon earth," the chronicler of his history tells us, "so its streets are not altogether the straightest or least intricate, Mr. Winkle being greatly puzzled by their manifold windings and twistings, looked about him for a decent shop in which he could apply afresh for counsel and instruction." This he ultimately found in Bob Sawyer's "surgery," "something between a shop and a private house." What happened there is common knowledge.

Unfortunately, the exact locality of the shop occupied by "Sawyer, late Nockemorf," cannot be traced. Many persons long resident in Bristol aver that it was in Park Street. At about the time that Mr. Winkle was there Park Street was made up of private houses with the small bow-window, "of what, in times by-gone, had been the front parlour." The street now, however, is one of the finest in the city. In those days Park Street was a far

steeper street than it is now, there being no viaduct at the bottom, crossing Frogmore Street as now. Right at bottom was an old-fashioned chemist's shop, which would meet all requirements.

Mr. Winkle, after his friendly bout with Bob Sawyer and Benjamin Allen, returned to The Bush Inn, there to find and make friends once more with Mr. Dowler, and later to be confronted with Sam Weller in pursuit. Every reader will remember the interview that ensued which ultimately ended in Mr. Winkle being locked in his bedroom awaiting Mr. Pickwick's instructions, which the "immortal" brought personally next morning at eight o'clock when "he walked into the coffee-room of The Bush Tavern."

The Bush Inn, the scene of these incidents, no longer exists, but we are able to present a picture of it as it appeared in those days



THE BUSH INN, BRISTOL

From the original painting by J. Maggs

when it was the chief coaching inn of the city, and when Moses Pickwick, from which the novelist got the name of his now historic character, was one of the coach proprietors carrying on business in connection therewith. It stood until 1864 near the Guildhall, and its site is now occupied by Lloyd's Bank.

In the chapter of *Pickwick* following the incidents referred to is detailed Sam's quest of Arabella Allen, who, we are assured, "was immured somewhere near the Downs." Sam walked up one hill and down another, "only it's all up hill at Clifton"! He "struggles across the Downs against a good high wind, wondering if it is always necessary to hold your hat on with both hands in this part of the country"! He comes to a shady by-place about which were

sprinkled several little villas of quiet and secluded appearance, where he had the interview with the groom outside a stable door, who was "apparently persuading himself that he was doing something with a spade and wheelbarrow." After the groom's disappearance Sam sat meditating in this lane, "revolving in his mind a plan for knocking at all the doors within five miles of Bristol," when the apparition of his Ipswich valentine, Mary, the housemaid, appeared. How he assisted in the carpet shaking, the pleasure he derived from the encounter, and how it all led to the discovery of Arabella is too familiar to be recapitulated here. Readers will, no doubt, turn to those two chapters of the book and refresh their memory and enjoy the pleasure of the company of Pickwickians in Bristol.

Dickens is not specific enough for one to be sure which was the lane where Sam had that pleasant few minutes with Mary which led ultimately to the success of his quest, but enthusiasts in the city have discovered a lane which they honestly and faithfully believe to be "Sam Weller's Lane." But we fear it must be purely conjectural in spite of the fact that they even go so far as to show the house where the "elderly gentleman of scientific attainments" was seated in his library, and to whom Mr. Pickwick's lantern, so constantly twisted and turned, caused so much thought. They were "not meteors—they were too low; not glow-worms—they were too high! They were not will-o'-the-wisps; not fire-flies; not fireworks! What could they be?" This extraordinary and wonderful phenomenon of nature, it will be remembered, was unceremoniously disposed of by the scientific gentleman's servant as "thieves."

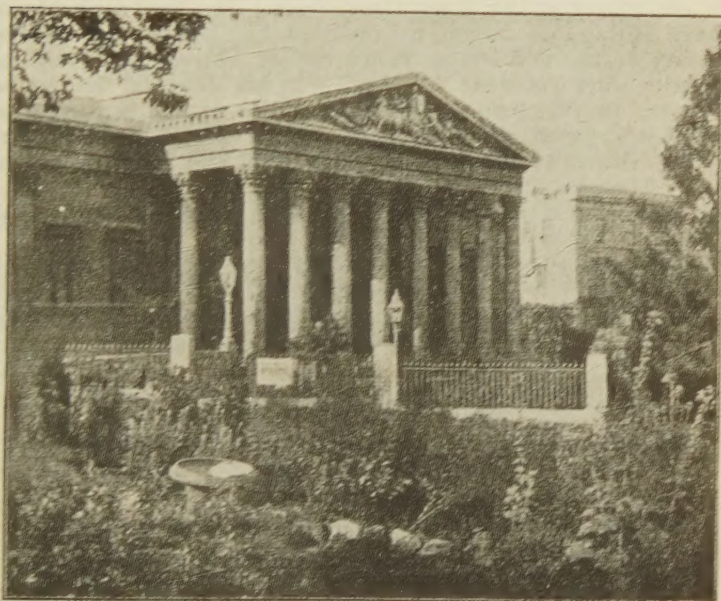
Bristol comes into the book again when the Pickwickians returned to it on a peace-making expedition to Benjamin Allen. Mr. Pickwick and Sam again stayed at the Bush, and it was here that the story of the "Bagman's Uncle" was recited by the one-eyed bagman. Dickens scarcely refers again to Bristol in his books, except very cursorily.

In *Barnaby Rudge*, Mr. Haredale, after the conversation with Edward Chester and his niece in the locksmith's house, apparently retired to Bristol, for in the beginning of Chapter LXXXI. we find him in the mail coach office of that city about to re-visit London.

There is also a reference to Bristol and its Bishop of 1850 in "Last Words of the Old Year" in *Miscellaneous Papers*, which originally appeared in *Household Words* for January 4th, 1851. The "Old Year" is dying and making his bequests to the "New," amongst which are "Nicholas Wiseman" and the "Pope of Rome," both of whom are left with the injunction that they should "study well the speech of the Dean of Bristol, made in Bristol aforesaid"; and that the "New Year" should "deal with them and the whole vexed question according to that speech. And," he goes on, "I do hereby bequeath to my successor the said speech and the said faithful Dean, as great possessions and good guides, and I wish with all my heart the said faithful Dean were removed a little farther to the West of England and made Bishop

of Exeter!" The Dean of Bristol in 1850 was the Rev. Gilbert Elliott.

It was to a Bristol gentleman, too, that Dickens wrote: "I have great faith in the poor; to the best of my ability I always endeavour to present them in a favourable light to the rich; and I shall never cease, I hope, until I die to advocate their being made as happy and as wise as the circumstances of their condition, in its utmost improvement, will admit of their becoming." The letter from which this is quoted was sent to Mr. James Verry Staples, who had been reading *A Christmas Carol* to the poor of Bristol,



THE VICTORIA ROOMS, BRISTOL

Where Dickens acted in "Not so Bad as We Seem"

and had written to Dickens to tell him of the effect it had had upon his readers. This is the earliest record of *A Christmas Carol* being read publicly. But what Mr. Staples did in 1844 has been emulated throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles, and not the least in the city of Bristol itself, which boasts the first Dickens Society founded in this country.

The first occasion Dickens visited Clifton on his reading and theatrical tours was in connection with the amateur company of players, of which he was the life and soul. This distinguished company of amateurs toured the country with Lord Lytton's "Not So Bad As We Seem" in order to raise funds for "The Guild of Literature and Art," and on November 13th, 1851, the play was

presented at the Victoria Rooms. "We had a noble night," he said in a letter to his wife. "The room (which is the largest one in England) was crammed in every part . . . the enthusiasm was prodigious . . . a very great and striking success."

In August, 1858, he gave his first reading in Clifton. "You will be glad to hear," he wrote to his daughter Mamie, "that at Clifton last night a torrent of five hundred shillings bore Arthur [Smith]* away, pounded him against the wall, flowed on to the seats over his body, scratched him, and damaged his best dress suit. All to his unspeakable joy."

Dickens was again in Clifton, giving a public reading in May, 1866, and stayed at the Down Hotel there. His final visit was on January 25th, 1868, when he included his famous and fateful rendering of the murder of Nancy, which he said was "by far the best murder yet done." Writing to his daughter Mamie on the success of the evening, he said: "We had a contagion of fainting, and yet the place was not hot. I should think we had from a dozen to twenty ladies borne out, stiff and rigid, at various times. It became quite ridiculous."

We believe these readings took place at the Victoria Rooms, and the Old Athenæum in Corn Street respectively.

Finally we may note that the Clifton Suspension Bridge across the Avon was part of the old Hungerford Bridge. It was removed there in 1863, when the old Hungerford market of Dickens's boyhood days was demolished to make room for the railway.

"SHE LAY AT REST"

*A condensed and metrical Version of chapters lxxi. and lxxii. of
"The Old Curiosity Shop."*

By ROBERT ALLBUT

DEAR, gentle, patient, noble Nell was dead,
Midst solemn stillness there she lay at rest,
In that last slumber on her lowly bed;
No trouble more shall vex her peaceful breast.

No sleep so calm, beyond their falt'ring prayers;
So free from pain, so fair to look upon.
Where now the traces of her early cares,
Her sufferings and fatigues? All gone.

Dear Nell was dead; nor did that death disclose
One mournful vestige of her life forlorn;
But tranquil beauty and profound repose,
With peace and perfect happiness were born.

Yet still her former self lay there unchanged;
The old fireside on that fond face had smiled,
Through haunts of care that gentle glance had ranged,
And by the bedside of the dying child.

* Dickens's Manager.

So shall we know the angels after death,
In their majestic loveliness divine;
Alike, as in this world of mortal breath,
The same sweet look in Heav'n's exalted shrine.

Along the crowded path they bore her now,
Unsullied as the snow that wrapt the ground,
To the old church, where erst with thoughtful brow,
She oft had lingered, 'midst the tombs around.

Softly they laid their sacred burden down,
Where peerless glory overspread the pave
With hallowed light from noontide's radiant crown,
Like God's pure love, to consecrate her grave.

The vault was covered, and the closing stone
Fixed in its place, yet still the mourners stayed:
What time the dusk of evening had come on,
And night's wide mantle cast its sombre shade.

The moon ascending, touched with silver gleam
On pillared aisle, on monument and wall;
And seemed to shine with clearest, tend'rest beam
Full on her quiet grave, the most of all.

In that calm time, when heaven-sent dreams allure,
And worldly hopes are humbled in the dust,
When outward things and inward thoughts assure
Of Life Immortal, glorified and just,

With faith confirmed in all humility,
Their hearts serene, submissive to the rod,
With tranquil souls and chastened reverie
They turned away and left the child with God.

For every fragile form upon this earth,
From which His Finger sets the spirit free,
A hundred virtues rise and have their birth,
In shapes of Mercy, Love and Charity.

For every tear that sorrowing mortals shed
(When grief sincere the saddened heart benumbs)
Over the green graves of the youthful dead
Some good is born, some gentler nature comes.

So bright creations that defy his powers,
Upspringing in Death's ruthless steps, are given;
And his dark path in this vain world of ours
Becomes a way of glorious light to Heaven.

THE BRISTOL AND CLIFTON DICKENS SOCIETY

THERE is a peculiar interest in the fact that the Fellowship Conference is to be held in Bristol. The capital of the West may not figure so prominently as some other towns in Dickens's life or works, but Bristol was the first town in England to boast a regularly constituted Dickens Society. There had existed for some years in Birmingham a private "circle" of Dickens enthusiasts, but there was no Dickens Society in the country until, in April, 1902, a public meeting, called by Mr. J. W. T. Ley, was held in the Hannah More Hall, Park Street. Out of that meeting grew the Bristol and Clifton Dickens Society, with Mr. Norris Mathews, F.R.Hist.S., the City Librarian, as President, Mr. A. J. Tonkin as Vice-President, Mr. J. W. T. Ley as Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, and the Duke of Beaufort, the Rt. Hon. Lewis Fry, and Mr. T. Thatcher as hon. members.

From the first the success of the Society was assured, though the membership did not increase rapidly. In the following October the Dickens Fellowship was started, and among the letters of good wishes that were read at the inaugural meeting was one from the Secretary of this pioneer Society. At the end of the first winter session the Bristol Society, with about 50 members, became affiliated to the Fellowship, and there has been no break in the association ever since. Mr. Norris Mathews resigned the Presidency in 1903, and was succeeded by the Rev. A. N. Blatchford, B.A., who is probably the most popular Bristolian.

With him at the head the Society went ahead vigorously, and when he resigned a couple of years ago the membership was well over a hundred. Prof. R. P. Cowl, M.A., now holds the presidential office, Mr. A. J. Tonkin is still Vice-President, and it would be impossible to exaggerate the Society's indebtedness to him and his wife. The actual founder was Mr. Ley, but the Society would never have survived its infancy but for the enthusiasm and energy of Mr. Tonkin. The Society also owes much to Mr. Charles Andrews, who succeeded Mr. Ley as secretary in 1904, held office for two years, and then after a couple of years of retirement again took up the duties for a season. It should be added that the Bristol and Clifton Dickens Society has never overlooked what ought to be the primary work of such an organisation. Year after year it has raised sums for charity, and the Guild of the Poor Things, a local organisation which does grand work among the cripples, has benefited to the extent of probably £50 or more. The present secretary, as our readers are aware, is the energetic Mr. E. W. Down.

PICKWICK PICTURES BY CECIL ALDIN

It was generally agreed that the illustrations to the *Pickwick Papers* painted by Mr. Cecil Aldin and issued in an edition of the book last year were among the best ever done for the immortal book.

Dickensians will welcome therefore the news that a set of eight of the best of them have been reproduced in the original size for

framing, by Messrs. Lawrence & Jellicoe. At the very nominal price of twenty shillings the set there should be a huge demand for them, for in this new form the pictures, if possible, look even better than they did in the book.

We understand the pictures are sold separately at 2s. 6d.

PHASES OF DICKENS: A NOTABLE BOOK *

By J. W. T. LEY

THERE will be many additions to Dickensian literature in the course of the next few months, but the first in the field is very likely to prove the best. Mr. Cuming Walters has produced a volume worthy of his reputation as a *litterateur*, and worthy of the position he holds as President of the Dickens Fellowship. It is quite a modest little volume, and the author has steadily avoided "gush." If there is one thing that strikes the reader of his book more than another it is its sanity. The author is an enthusiastic admirer of Dickens the man, and a whole-hearted lover of the novels, but he does not "lose his head." He is never blind to Dickens's shortcomings; his, as he says, is not a spirit of blind adulation. "My purpose in these pages," we read in the introduction, "is simply to bring anew into the light some aspects of the man of genius and some phases of his character, and to reassert the nature of his mission and the significance of his message. . . . Of what there is to say of Dickens little has by now been left unsaid, nor are his works in need of exposition, for his message is explicit and unmistakable. But," he adds, "it cannot be wholly profitless to take a survey of his complete design and to show how, from the most elaborate of his novels to the shortest of his journalistic articles, he was consistently carrying out a great campaign."

The author's purpose being thus clearly defined, it may be said without hesitation that he has given us a deeply interesting and a valuable book. It is not with Dickens as a story-teller that he is concerned, nor with Dickens the familiar friend, but with Dickens the Influence—Dickens "as a warrior against evil, as a champion of good, as a guide to the ideal."

And this was worth doing. George Gissing has given us an unapproachable "Critical Study," Mr. G. K. Chesterton has produced a masterful "Appreciation," many writers have written biographies and character-studies of the man himself: there was room for this book—so transparently sincere as it is—dealing with Dickens's wonderful influence for good. Much has been published on this subject, too, of course, but there was a space on the shelves which Mr. Walters's book will fill exactly.

The author points unerringly to the reason for Dickens's wonderful popularity. He would be prepared to admit—he does admit very often in the course of his pages—that Dickens had his faults as

* "Phases of Dickens: the Man, his Message, and his Mission," by J. Cuming Walters (President of the Dickens Fellowship, 1910-11). With Portrait. London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd. 5s. net.

a novelist; none but the hopelessly undiscerning, of course, would think of denying it. Yet, if we admit this, we have to answer the question, "Why is he so popular?" There have been other masters of laughter and of tears: why does Dickens hold such an unrivalled popularity? It is because "primarily he was a lover of his fellow-man," as Mr. Walters says. He was that before he was a novelist. It is because as we read his books we are better men and women; in short, it is because he was an Influence for good. "With his attributes and capacity Dickens was rendered a man of destiny," says Mr. Walters in his introduction. "His objective was perfectly clear, and his pronouncements are unmistakable. The honest man had an honest and exalted purpose, and that purpose was so universal that it is purged of every trace of self-interest. He was a moulder of national character, a regenerator of his race, a reformer of his times." I have no doubt but that there are superior persons who may sneer at this, and talk of exaggeration, but its truth is unchallengeable.

This is an eminently "quotable" book, and the temptation is well-nigh irresistible. I like Mr. Walters's insistence upon Dickens's patriotism. England never produced a truer patriot, but his patriotism bore no resemblance to that modern substitute for it which would seem to suggest that all foreigners are emanations from the nether regions, whilst the Englishman is the supreme example of Divine creation.

"An intense patriot," says Mr. Walters, "he was dissatisfied with the England in which he was born. . . . Dickens set himself a colossal task in trying to realise his dream of another England—an England brighter and cheerier, with men of real worth and dignity, with women of real charm and sincerity, with rulers of real humanity—another England, with closer union between rich and poor, with fewer social divisions and sectional differences—another England, ready to profit and learn from the condemned foreigner, to widen its sympathies, to exterminate its animus—another England, with politics free from charlatanism, and religion cleansed of hypocrisy—another England, with fewer workhouses and slums, and more schools and recreation halls—another England, in which humbug should not be pampered, crime should be less prevalent, and brotherly feeling more manifest. This was the England of Charles Dickens's vision, the England of his determined aim."

As the author points out, Dickens had no definite schemes of reform: that was not his business. This evil and that evil he could see; he was concerned with pointing them out, with pleading for the sufferers, and with implanting into men's hearts a better and a kindlier spirit towards each other. He knew that evils are man-made, that evil is in man, that the world can be improved only by men and women being improved; and he knew that of all blessed qualities—more blessed even than Mercy itself—that of Sympathy is best of all. This is the secret of his popularity; this is the secret of his greatness. He was a good man, who lived a Life of Uses. "The jester revealed himself as knight-errant, girt for the tourney, ready for as sublime a Quest as the Holy Grail. Knight-errant he remained, the gayest in apparel, the most inflexible in purpose, and not the least victorious in achievement. His sole inspiration

was the Good of Humanity. His message was Hope and Cheerfulness. His object was a Better England."

Even to glance at Mr. Walters's treatment of the various phases is impossible in the space that can be assigned to this notice. The chapter headed "His Last Mystery" will be turned to with interest by every reader. I do not propose to deal with it here at all beyond saying that it is very ably written, and that, in my opinion, Mr. Walters's theory stands unshaken. The opening chapter on "Characteristics" contains some excellent things. With the charge that Dickens exaggerated Mr. Cuming Walters has no sympathy. "Dickens," he says, "did not exceed the legitimate licence of every artist striving to convey a truthful effect and a full realisation of it. He chose extreme cases, but he was justified, and they were none the less correct because they were isolated. He used fact in romance, and imparted romance to fact, and he was violating no law." That is well said.

We are often confronted with the question, "Which do you consider to be Dickens's best books?" Mr. Walters answers this question. He divides the books into six classes, and in Class I. he places *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* as the three masterpieces. Most of us will be surprised to find that *Pickwick* appears in Class V. as "the best story of a rambling type." I fancy that the majority of people would place *Pickwick* first among the masterpieces. But in this matter Mr. Walters is careful to insist that he is only expressing a purely personal opinion, and I have only referred to it as a matter of interest. There is never likely to be unanimity in such a matter, and the same remark applies to the characters, of which Mr. Walters also gives his own selection. Let it be said finally that not since Mr. Chesterton issued his book have we had a volume so well worth reading, a volume that can be more conscientiously recommended to readers of *The Dickensian*.

CHARLES DICKENS AND MADAME CELESTE

By W. GLYDE WILKINS

AN actress and danseuse but little known to the present generation, and who is now only a memory to the grandfathers and grandmothers of the present day, was Madame Celeste, who, as her name would indicate, was born in France. She held the boards in England for over forty years, her first appearance in London being at the "Queen's Theatre" in 1831, and her last in October, 1874, when she played her favourite character "Mariane" twelve nights. She was also a great favourite in America, which she visited first in 1827, returning to England in 1830. While in Philadelphia in 1829 she married a man named Elliott, and thus became known as Madame Celeste-Elliott. She was again in the United States from 1834 to 1837, and was so favourably received that it is said she returned to England with over forty thousand pounds as the profits of the trip. Her last trip to America was in 1865, and she was there during Dickens's second visit to that coun-

try in 1868. After her retirement from the stage she lived in Paris, where she died February 12th, 1882.

The present writer has in his possession play bills and letters which show that there were very friendly relations between her and Dickens for a period of twenty-five years, from 1845 to 1870.

On the play bill of the Theatre Royal, Adelphi, dated December 18th, 1845, of which Madame Celeste was then the manageress, there is announced a production of

THE CHIMES

BY SPECIAL PERMISSION OF CHARLES DICKENS, ESQ.

DRAMATISED BY MARK LEMON AND GILBERT A. A'BECKET

It is well known that Dickens was very much averse to the production of his works on the stage, and went so far as to institute Court proceedings to prevent it, and that even when he gave permission and assisted in their production he was seldom satisfied with the result. It is therefore certain that if he gave Madame Celeste especial permission for the presentation of a dramatic version of *The Chimes*, he must have, at this early date, been very friendly disposed towards her.

The writer can find nothing in print as to the relations between them for the next ten years, but in "The Letters of Charles Dickens," Dickens says in one to Mrs. Winter, dated April 3rd, 1855:—

I thought you would understand that in sending the card for the box I sent an assurance that there was nothing amiss. I am pleased to find that you were so interested in the play. My ladies say that the first part is painful and wants relief. I have been trying to see it a dozen times, but have never seen it yet, and never may. Madame Celeste is injured thereby (you see how unreasonable people are!), and says in the green room, "M. Dickens est artiste! Mais il n'a jamais vu 'Janet Pride.'"

The reference which Dickens makes in this letter to Madame Celeste shows that he was sufficiently interested in her to repeat her remark calling him an artist, and to indicate his desire to see her representation of *Janet Pride*.

The next link in the chain showing the relations between the author and the actress is found in the first of a series of four letters which have recently come into the writer's possession, through the administrator of the estate of Mrs. Elliott, a daughter-in-law of Madame Celeste, who died recently in Baltimore, Md., and amongst whose effects the letters were found. Three of the letters were addressed to Madame Celeste, and the fourth to a Mrs. Johnson, which contains a reference to Madame Celeste.

The first letter was written at Tavistock House, and dated Saturday, 29th May, 1858, evidently in reply to a request for an inscription in a book belonging to the actress and one of her friends, and while very short, it shows the author's willingness to oblige the great actress.

My dear Madame Celeste,

With the greatest pleasure. If you will have the kindness to send the book here, I will write in it immediately.

Faithfully yours always, CHARLES DICKENS.

In a letter which Dickens wrote to Monsieur Rignier, dated November 16th, 1859, published in "The Letters of Charles Dickens," he says:—



MADAME CELESTE AS MADAME DEFARGE IN "A TALE OF TWO CITIES"
AT THE LYCEUM THEATRE, 1860

Madame Celeste was with me yesterday, wishing to dramatise *A Tale of Two Cities* for the Lyceum, after bringing out the Christmas Pantomime. I gave her permission, and the book, but I fear that her company (troupe) is a very poor one.

A playbill in the writer's collection shows that the first performance was given at the Lyceum Theatre, January 30th, 1860, and

that Madame Celeste played the two parts of Colette Dubois and Therese Defarge. The dramatisation of the book was done by Tom Taylor. As will be seen by the above letter, Dickens evidently doubted the success of the play, owing to his fear that her company was a very poor one, and, in order to prevent its failure, he took a personal interest in the staging of the play, as the programme says: "From the story of Charles Dickens, Esq., who in the kindest manner superintended the production of the piece." There can be no doubt that Dickens's experience as stage manager of the numerous amateur performances with which he was connected was of great benefit to Madame Celeste in the production, and it also shows that it was friendship for the actress personally which induced him to give her permission to present the play and personally assist her in its production.

The second letter, dated Monday, 13th February, 1860, is also on theatrical matters, and shows Madame Celeste's great faith in Dickens's judgment in things theatrical, and that she was on such friendly terms with him that she did not hesitate to ask for his advice and suggestions regarding two little plays which she was considering about presenting on the stage of her theatre:—

My dear Madame Celeste,

I send you back with this, both the pieces. On the whole, I think rather well of the little piece—"The Abbé de Vaudreuil." It comes rather like a piece Charles Matthews did—I forget the name of it—he was a German student and fell asleep by an old castle—but the situations are good, and you could make it very pretty. Well got up, I should say it is worth doing.

But, if done, it should be acted in one respect. Everything that takes place at the Court of Louis XV. should have direct reference to the two young lovers. Further than this, I think great point could be given to the vision if Henri, in the opening scene, regretted the "damned fine glorious old times," and swore tremendously in praise of them, and asked the abbé to reproduce them, "because these times are so devilish commonplace and unpicturesque to compare with those." His short experience of the dissolute court could show him his mistake, and he could get a gag to the effect that these are rather better times—to be married in, at all events.

Will you leave me a Private Box for my daughters to-morrow night, and will you also leave it for me Wednesday, too, if you have it to spare? I will see you on Wednesday evening.

Faithfully yours always,

C. D.

The third letter was written while Dickens was on his second visit to America, and while not addressed to Madame Celeste herself, contains a reference to her. It is also interesting in showing how the "American Catarrh," which seized him shortly after his arrival, still held him in its grip, and how he had to reserve his strength for the readings. It shows, too, that Dickens was not only always ready to oblige the actress herself, but any of her friends.

Baltimore, Sunday, Ninth February, 1868.

My dear Madam,

I enclose my signature for your friend most readily.

My time here is, and would be if I had not a most abominable cold

which obliges me to lie down half the day, wholly absorbed. I remain here all to-morrow and next day, and I read on both evenings. I cannot, therefore, have the pleasure of making you a visit, but I am glad with the opportunity of sending you all good wishes and begging you to remember me most kindly to Madame Celeste when you write to her.

My dear Madam, Faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

Mrs. Johnston.

The last letter of the series shows that Madame Celeste always felt the friendship between her and Dickens warranted her in asking his advice not only on matters connected with her own theatrical ventures, but also in matters in which her family were interested. Just what was the subject on which her daughters desired suggestions, Dickens's letter does not disclose.

26, Wellington Street, London,
Monday, Fifteenth March, 1869.

My dear Madame Celeste,

I would very willingly write to your daughters if I had any suggestions to offer, but I really have none. The ladies and gentlemen concerned are the best judges of what is in the compass of their powers and means, and are far more likely to be successful with something of their own originating than with anybody's notion.

Faithfully yours always,

CHARLES DICKENS.

Madame Celeste.

While these letters do not indicate that the relations between the actress and the author were of an intimate social nature, such as existed between Dickens and Lady Blessington, the author believes that they do show they were of such a friendly character that Madame Celeste is entitled to be numbered amongst the friends of Charles Dickens.

POETICAL TRIBUTES TO CHARLES DICKENS

LXXXII

FRIEND of the friendless, curious peering eye
Which, through the beggar's rags, the harlot's ban,
The reeking hide of the vulgarian,
Sees the quick heart of our humanity;
Impatient reprobator of the lie
That flares and sputters in the seemly van
Of social order 'stablished, where to man
And monkey jabber their responsive cry.
Illuminator of the darkest slums
Of England and the world with humorous quip,
Which flashes, and wild laughter flashes too:
Dickens, Swift, Vanderdecken, of such a crew,
Of build outlandish, as might man a ship,
Where Lapman's coast line fronts on Christendom's.

W. M. ROSSETTI.

A DICKENS DINNER FOR THE FIRST TIME REPORTED

By EDWIN W. CODGESHALL

(*Conclusion*)

ONE gentleman, evidently on excellent terms with himself and his dinner, soliloquised for the benefit of his neighbour as he paused in his repast: "The process of digestion, as I have been informed by anatomical friends, is one of the most wonderful works of nature. I do not know how it may be with others, but it is a great satisfaction to me to know when regaling on my humble fare that I am putting in motion the most beautiful machinery with which we have any acquaintance. I really feel at such times as if I was doing a public service. When I have wound myself up, if I may employ such a term, and know that I am going, I feel that in the lesson afforded by the works within me I am a benefactor to my kind."

Here a suppressed, hoarse female voice is heard to say: "Betsey, try the cowcubbers. God bless you!"

"Sir," said a youngish gentleman to a very ancient one, "while there's a ounce of wittles of any sort in this present roof, you're fully welcome to your share on it."

"I thank you kindly, Thomas, and I know your intentions well, which is the same I thank you kindly for. But no, Thomas, until such times as it's not to take it out of your children's mouth, which take it is, and call it by what name you will, it do remain and equally deprive, though may they come, and too soon they cannot come, no, Thomas, no," and the old gent retired under the table.

"Weal pie, wery good thing is weal pie when you know the lady as made it, and is quite sure it ain't kittens; arter all, though, where's the odds, when they're so like weal that the wery piemen themselves don't know the difference?"

"Don't they?"

"Not they, sir. I lodged in the same house with a pieman once, sir, and a wery nice man he was, regler clever chap, too, make pies out of anything, he could. 'What a number of cats you keep, Mr. Brooks,' says I when I'd got intimate with him. 'Ah,' says he, 'I do, a good many,' says he. 'You must be wery fond o' cats,' says I. 'Other people is,' says he, a-winkin' at me; 'they ain't in season till the winter, though,' says he. 'Not in season,' says I. 'No,' says he, 'fruits is in, cats is out.' 'Why, what do you mean?' says I. 'Mean,' says he, 'that I'll never be a party to the combination of butchers to keep up the prices of meat,' says he. Says he, a-squeegin' my hand very hard and vispering in my ear, 'Don't mention this 'ere again, but it's the seasinin' as does it. They's all made o' them noble animals,' says he, a-p'intin' to a wery nice little tabby kitten, 'and I seasons 'em for beef steak, weal or kidney, 'cordin' to the demand, and, more than that,' says he, 'I can make a weal a beef-steak, or a beef-steak a kidney, or any one on 'em a mutton at a minute's notice, just as the market changes and appetites wary.'"

"He must have been a very ingenious young man."

"Just was, sir, and the pies was beautiful."

Again the hoarse female voice was heard, this time in protestation: "Betsey, drink fair, wotever you do."

The drink seemed to be literally attended to at this period, judging from stray scraps of conversation that we caught up.

"You've been drinkin, sir," said one.

"As a general principle and in the most offensive sense of the words I consider you a liar. In that last observation you have unintentionally, sir, struck upon the truth."

"Wery good power of suction, Sammy—you'd ha' made an uncommon fine oyster, Sammy, if you'd been born in that station o' life."

"Did you ever taste beer?"

This addressed by the rakish young man to a diminutive female neighbour.

"I had a sip of it once."

"Here's a state of things—she never tasted it—it can't be tasted in a sip. Take a pull at that—but moderate your transports, you know, for you're not used to it."

"Wot's your usual tap, sir?"

"Oh, my young friend, all taps is vanities!"

"Well, I des-say they may be, sir, but wich is your particular wanity—wich wanity do you like the flavour on best, sir?"

"Do you take tea or coffee, sir?"

"Thankee, sir, I'll take whichever is most agreeable to yourself."

"What do you say to coffee?"

"Thankee, sir. Since you are so kind as to make a ch'ice of coffee, I will not go contrary to your own opinions. But don't you never find it a little 'eating?"

"Say tea, then. When did you come to town?"

"Were it yesterday afternoon? No, it were not—yes, it were—yes, it were yesterday afternoon."

"Sammy, if some of these here people don't want tappin' to-morrow mornin', I ain't your father, and that's wot it is. Why this here old lady next to me is a drowndin' herself in tea."

"Be quiet, can't you?"

"Sam, mark my words, my boy, if that secretary fellow keeps on for only five minutes more he'll blow himself up with toast and water."

"Well, let him if he wants to, it ain't no business of yourn."

"If this here lasts much longer, Sammy, I shall feel it my duty as a human bein' to rise and address the cheer. There's a young ooman on the next form but two as has drank nine breakfast cups and a half, and she's a-swellin' wisely before my eyes."

But for obvious reasons the dinner was drawing to a close. Some anticipated the close with self-complacent reflections like these: "Even the worldly goods of which we have just disposed, even cream, sugar, tea, toast, ham and eggs, even they have their moral. See how they come and go. Every pleasure is transitory. We

can't even eat long. If we indulge in harmless fluids we get the dropsy; if in exciting liquids we get drunk. What a soothing reflection is that!"

Some of the guests contemplating the past were apologetic, as thus: "I'm a heavy grubber, dear boy, but I always was. If it had been in my constitution to be a lighter grubber, I might have got into lighter trouble."

Some few of the guests still lingered over the repast: "Thank you, I don't know but what I will take a marrow pudding. Il fo manger, you know, il fo manger, that's the French saying, and mangering is as necessary to me as it is to a Frenchman or more so."

Long after everybody had finished, however, a small voice piped up from a distant part of the room:

"Please, sir, I want some more."

There was somewhat of a stir in the portion of the room from which the voice emanated, and a sound resembling applause, from which it may be inferred that the owner of the voice received more than he wanted.

Then glasses were filled all around, and a number of toasts were offered, from which we select a few of the more striking.

"Wal'r, my boy, in the Proverbs of Solomon you will find the following words: 'May we never want a friend in need nor a bottle to give him,' when found make a note of."

The expression "make a note of" appeared to arrest the attention of a gentleman with a superabundant shirt collar, and brought him to his feet with:

"And I will drink, if my friend on my right will permit me to take that social privilege, to the days when my young friend and myself were younger and fought our way in the world side by side. I may say of us, in words we have sung together before now:

"We two hae rin about the braes
And pu'd the gowans fine,"

in a figurative point of view, on several occasions. I am not exactly aware what gowans may be, but I have no doubt that my friend and myself would frequently have taken a pull at them if it had been feasible."

Efforts were made by the Chair to draw out one or two shining lights without success. One reverend gentleman was asked to address the meeting, but although he arose to his feet he remarked: "No, sir, I will not address the meeting. It's my opinion that this meeting is drunk."

Another gentleman, from whom much was evidently expected, was asked his name in order that he might be announced, but as his answer was "Cold punch," he was considered unavailable.

A young gentleman was the next speaker. He spoke evidently from a sense of duty, and said: "This is an occasion, in fact, when the general usages of life may be a little departed from without impropriety, and although I never was an orator in my life, and when I was in the House of Commons and had the honour of seconding

the Address, was, in fact, was laid up for a fortnight with the consciousness of failure, and, in point of fact, when I was devilish ill—still, you know, I feel that a duty devolves upon me, and when a duty devolves upon an Englishman he is bound to get out of it, in my opinion, in the best way he can.”

A man with a wooden leg was heard as follows: “We’ll crush a flowing wine cup, which I allude to brewing rum and water, we’ll pledge one another, for what says the poet?

And you needn’t, sir, be your black bottle,

For surely I’ll be mine,

And we’ll take a glass with a slice of lemon in it, to which you’re partial,

For auld lang syne.”

Then came a pause, and all the assembled company rose, while one said:

“A merry Christmas to us all, my dears, God bless us.”

And a tiny voice added: “God bless us every one.”

THE SOLICITORS OF DICKENS

LAST year Sheriff Fyfe published a notable little book on “Charles Dickens and the Law,” based upon a lecture given before the Glasgow Dickens Society. We have now a similar book dealing with the Solicitors of Dickens by W. Beckett, M.A., writer, Glasgow, and, like Sheriff Fyfe’s, was delivered to the same society as a lecture.

If these two books can be taken as the standard of the lectures given to the Glasgow Dickensians, we congratulate the Society on being so well served. Mr. Beckett has mastered his subject thoroughly, and presented it in a crisp, clear and lucid manner. Although he sees in Mr. Perker a solicitor of the first rank, he does not think very much of Dickens’s solicitors as a whole. He says the novelist’s predominating tendency to allow humorous treatment to grow into burlesque, prevents him from placing any of Dickens’s legal personages on the very highest level as works of art.

Mr. Beckett’s book is a thoughtful treatise, and will be valued by Dickensians. It is published by Messrs. Wm. Hodge & Co., of Glasgow, at one shilling net.

A DICKENS READER *

IN her preface to this collection of extracts from the novels of Dickens, Mrs. J. C. Smith says that “Ten years ago it almost seemed as if the fame of Dickens were under a cloud. That cloud has passed. The praise of Dickens has been sung of late by Mr. Gissing, by Mr. Chesterton, by Mr. Andrew Lang. Never since his death has Dickens been more popular than he is to-day.” We admit the truth of the last sentence, but do not agree with the

* “A Dickens Reader,” by Mrs. J. C. Smith. London: Harry Frowde. 1s. 6d

statement in the first. Dickens's fame has never been under a cloud. There was a time, perhaps, when it was considered to be rather bad taste to acknowledge admiration for his writings. But he always had his admirers, even if some followed the dictates of fashion and abstained from admitting their enthusiasm. If the Dickens Fellowship founded just upon ten years ago has done nothing else, it certainly can claim to have swept away that false attitude.

There has never been a period when Dickens's novels were not bought and read. And during the last few years all that has happened is that the fact has been accepted by the Philistine as a fact and not as a myth.

Mrs. Smith may also be sure that young people do read Dickens as well as grown ups, and that such a book as she has prepared will help to foster that reading. It will give young readers, as she says her aim is, a relish for his works, and the extracts she has printed will serve to send them to the books themselves.

THE COAST OF KENT

THE new volume in the County Coast Series, published by Mr. T. Fisher Unwin, is devoted to Kent, and naturally deals with the Dickens associations connected with it. So far as these are concerned, Mr. Arthur D. Lewis seems to have mastered the facts fairly fully, although he makes use of the erroneous statement that Dickens wrote some portions of *Bleak House* in Fort House, Broadstairs. We think, too, that Mr. Lewis would discover that the house that Dickens stayed in in the High Street there had not been rebuilt, but only had a shop front added to it. There are, too, one or two minor points not recorded, particularly as regards Dover. These need not be insisted on in a general book. But we feel somehow that Mr. Lewis is not as keen a Kent enthusiast as we are. Kent is so full of history and so full of charm that its coast deserves a worthier book. Mr. Lewis has practically nothing to say of the coast between Walmer and Dover. He certainly devotes a page or two to St. Margaret's Bay, but they are given up to a description of the wreck of the "Prussen," which happens to be lying there at the moment. Indeed, he seems to avoid the small and more interesting places all along. It is these small, but by no means unimportant spots, that have no literature of their own in the shape of endless guide books that have real interest, and whose history is worth seeking out.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DEAD DONKEYS AND POST BOYS

SIR,—In the March number you quote the *Northampton Independent* as recording that within a few miles of the place where Sam delivered his famous dictum, "No man never see a dead donkey," really and truly A DEAD DONKEY HAS BEEN FOUND!

On this subject I may say that when in Chapter 51 of *Pickwick* (1837) Bob Sawyer and Sam Weller were made to converse upon dead donkeys and post boys being unknown, a London editor joined in the humour of the thing with a sly cut or dig at Dickens. Sawyer had affirmed to Sam that in his practice "he had never been called in to visit a post boy nor ever saw one in the hospitals, and never know'd a churchyard where there was a post boy's tombstone, or see a dead post boy." And Sam's rejoinder was, "No! nor never vill; and there's another thing that no man ever see, and that's a dead donkey." The editor of the then *Mirror*, a small but popular London weekly, was much taken up with Dickens's early writings, giving many quotations and friendly criticisms. In the issue of October 28th, 1837, he gave amongst "*Pickwickiana* by Boz" the item as to post boys, with the following starred note at the foot of the column:—

* Boz is oblivious.—See the epitaph on a postboy :

Here I lays

Kild by a chaise.—ED. M.

Boz two or three years before this was, we know, familiar with the play and fun derivable from the word chaise. (See *Sketches*—Joseph Tugg and his son Cymon on the sands at Ramsgate.) His oblivity as to the post boy epitaph is, of course, a knock down. And what of Sam Weller? After all old Weller's teaching (*Pickwick*, Chapter 34) as to the importance of "alleybies," he sets up a strong negation amounting to an alibi as to dead post boys, which seemingly went wrong. But stay, perhaps the London editor of 1837 invented the inscription, or merely copied it from a book of humorous sayings. The inscription is too badly spelt and worded for a truthful, decent and respectable tombstone. Can any readers give any previous news of the epitaph?

As to the dead donkey which has come along after 74 years have elapsed, Boz, it may at once be admitted, was oblivious of it. Sam clenched the negation as to post boys by making it prospective as well as retrospective, and as to dead donkeys it was made to read as of the ever-present, "no man ever see," and to be thus read for all time. Alas! oblivious Boz! 'tis sad to think of it.

Yours truly,

JOHN SUDDABY.

7, Park Grove, Hull.

"OUR LADIES OF SORROW" AND "THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP"

SIR,—While browsing among my books recently I chanced upon De Quincey's essay, "*Our Ladies of Sorrow*," and was much struck by the similarity existing between the incident he describes in that portion of the essay devoted to "*Our Lady of Tears*" and the main theme of *The Old Curiosity Shop*. So far as I can ascertain, the essay was published in 1845, or five years after the publication of the novel, so that Dickens could not, as I at first imagined, have been inspired by De Quincey; but, as a matter of general interest to Dickensians, you may feel disposed to find space for the relative excerpt from the essayist.

Yours faithfully,

A. C. BROOKES CROSS.

379, Clapham Road, S.W., September 13th, 1911.

"The eldest of the three (sisters) is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, *Our Lady of Tears*. . . This sister it is that carries keys more than papal at her girdle, which open every cottage and every palace. She, to my knowledge, sate all last summer by the bedside of the blind beggar, him that so often and so gladly I talked with, whose pious daughter, eight

years old, with the sunny countenance, resisted the temptations of play and village mirth to travel all day long on dusty roads with her afflicted father. For this did God send her a great reward. In the springtime of the year, and whilst yet her own spring was budding, He called her to Himself. But her blind father mourns for ever over her: still he dreams at midnight that the little guiding hand is locked within his own, and still he wakens to a darkness that is now within a second and a deeper darkness."—[From Thos. De Quincey, "Our Ladies of Sorrow," *Suspira de Profundis*. 1845.]

DICKENSIANA MONTH BY MONTH

BOOKS.

Miscellaneous Papers; Plays and Poems, by Charles Dickens, with introduction by B. W. Matz, 2 vols., completing the "Centenary" Edition. London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd. 8s. 6d. each vol.

Phases of Dickens: The Man, his Message and Mission, by J. Cuming Walters. With portrait. London: Chapman & Hall. 5s. net.

A Dickens Reader, by Mrs. J. C. Smith. London: Henry Frowde. 1s. 6d.

MAGAZINE AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES.

"My Father and his Friends," by Alfred Tennyson Dickens. Fully illustrated. *Nash's Magazine*, Sept.

"The Gentlemen of Dickens." Letters in *The Outlook*, Aug. 26th, Sept. 2nd and 16th.

"Dickens's First Home in London" (Johnson Street). Illus. *Daily Chronicle*, Aug. 28th. Letter on same, by B. W. Matz, Aug. 30th.

"Dickens and the Sunday League." *Evening News*, Aug. 31st.

"Dickens Memorial Theatre, Lewisham." Letter from Leslie Wright. *Lewisham Journal*, Sept. 1st.

"The Lawyers of Charles Dickens," by George Packard, of Chicago. Reprinted from the "American Law Review," in *The Law Times*, Sept. 2nd and 9th.

"Dickens and the Drama." *Era*, Sept. 2nd.

"The Portsmouth of Charles Dickens," by J. W. T. L. *Portsmouth Southern Daily Post*. Sept. 4th.

"Thackeray and Dickens in Paris." *Pall Mall Gazette*, Sept. 5th.

"The Centenary of Charles Dickens," by Kate Upson Clark. *Christian Globe*, Sept. 7th.

"At Dickens's Shrine." *Portsmouth Evening News*, Sept. 8th.

"Charles Dickens en France." *Journal des Debats*, Sept. 13th.

"Where did Dickens spend his Honeymoon?" by C. Van Noorden. Illus. *Evening News*, Sept. 9th, and letter Sept. 15th. Reply by A. J. Phillip, Sept. 16th.

"Department and Turveydrop's." *Dancing Times*, Sept.

"A Preface to the Dickens Centenary," by U. Rutari. *Velhagen & Klasing's Monatshefte* (Berlin), Sept.

"Dickens in Goodman's Fields," by Charles McNaught. (Round About Old East London.) *East London Advertiser*, Sept. 16th.

"Mr. Pickwick" in Paris, staged at the Athénée. *The Times*, Sept. 22nd.

"Monsieur Pickwick." *Morning Post*, Sept. 22nd.

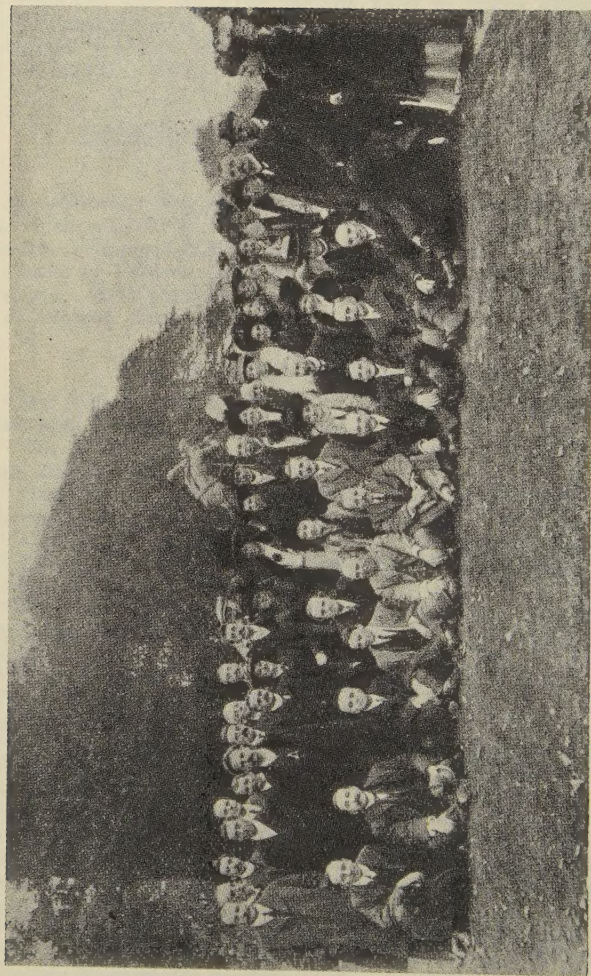
"Stage in France: a Gallic Pickwick." *Daily Telegraph*, Sept. 22nd.

"Mr. Pickwick on the French Stage," by John N. Raphael. *Evening Standard*, Sept. 22nd.

"Monsieur Pickwick." (Illus.) *Comœdia* (Paris), Sept. 22nd.

"A Dickensian Hostelry." *T. P.'s Weekly*, Sept. 22nd.

"Pickwick" (To-night's Gossip). *Evening News*, Sept. 22nd.



THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP AT BRISTOL

Group of Delegates to the Conference, October 7th, 1911

From a Photograph by H. Orchard